Crossing Wires

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Crossing Wires

by littlebreadrolls

Summary

As he watches Hannibal slink around the small room, turning out lights and closing curtains, the guilt – which is never far from Will – hits him again. Androids don't typically want sex. Or, at least, Will's never heard of androids wanting sex. Androids protect their handlers, sure, they're wired to do that – but they don't take care of them in the way that Hannibal takes care of Will.

Not with such tenderness.

It must be Will. He's corrupted Hannibal. His loneliness, his secret longings, have made Hannibal what he is.

Will has taken a priceless government-owned killing machine and turned it into his own Galatea.

OR: The one where Hannibal is an android and a government asset and Will is his handler.

Notes

my tumblr

See the end of the work for more notes

CHAPTER 1

Once, Beverly asks him, "Why did you join HAIP anyway?"

Will isn't looking at her. A few minutes ago, he just barely managed to win a race against time and slam shut the bottom drawer of his desk before she breezes into his office. The bottom drawer of his desk is where Will keeps his secret stash of whiskey. He's still paranoid that — in the half second before he got the drawer closed — she might have seen what he was hiding. He's still too nervous to meet her eyes.

Instead, clutching at his discreetly spiked coffee mug, he pauses to think, and to drink, and then finally he says, "I love my country. Isn't that why everyone joins?"

Beverly smiles at him. Her hand is leaving fingerprints on his desk which Hannibal, the finicky bastard, will want to have to have them wiped away later. Beverly says, "Well, it's what everyone says anyway."

–

They're in Beirut that day. Hannibal is driving through the city streets on some swanky dark motorcycle, and Will is in his head, imagining, and the roar of the motor doesn't drown out the noises of traffic, or of chattering crowds, or of Hannibal’s breath (which is barely accelerated at all because Hannibal's respiratory system is much more efficient than any human's).

"Where is he now?" says Hannibal.

He sounds perfectly serene, but he's not, Will knows. Will knows this because Will can feel inside of him: feel all of Hannibal's sharp edges, all of his insides writhing and roiling. And all because the man they're after is nearly set to slip away.

Hannibal doesn't like it when their targets slip away.

Will clasps his hands around his coffee mug, scans the screen overlay mapped across his own field of vision. The little red dot chases the little blue dot across a tangled gridline of map streets. Hannibal is red; Will chose the color because it matched Hannibal’s inhuman red eyes.

"He's going in the same direction,” Will says, “but don’t turn yet. There'll be a truck in his way, you can cut him off. Go past the next two streets – right, okay – you have to go faster – faster – turn now – "

On the screen, the two dots nearly converge.

"I see him," Hannibal says shortly, and then there's no more talking – just the sound of wheels skidding.

Will closes out the overhead satellite view of the city and switches instead to the live feed cast from Hannibal's own artificial irises. The target is still zipping some meters ahead, his silhouette outlined helpfully in blue. Hannibal's excruciatingly close to him now, close enough that Hannibal – and, therefore, Will – can distinguish every single one of the target's eyelashes, every bead of sweat coiling down his neck. His expression is contorted in fear. Good.

He *should* be afraid.

Will watches as Hannibal's arm lifts. As it aims the gun.

By now, Will is pumping so much adrenaline into Hannibal that he finds his own breath coming short in sympathy. The human brain, he supposes, must find it rather difficult to manipulate another being's wires without getting its own crossed from time to time. In his office, Will's finger tightens on an imaginary trigger; in Beirut, Hannibal's tightens on a real one.

The target's head explodes.

A second later, their motorcycles collide. Hannibal uses his own forward momentum to direct the target's vehicle into a controlled collision. The gaping mouth of an empty stall nearby receives them both and explodes. In a flash, the world turns orange and red and white, and there's nothing to be heard but the sound of shrieking bystanders, crackling fire. Then, Hannibal must pull himself from the wreckage: the cityscape returns abruptly to view, albeit colored over with gouts of smoke. Through Hannibal's eyes, Will watches as Hannibal's arms begin shifting through broken planks and rubble until they find – ah, there it is.

The target's body. Nearly intact, too, except for the head. And the leg. And the rib cage. And the left leg.

Well, at least there are no other bodies around. Civilian deaths may be necessary, sometimes, but they always look bad for HAIP. The goal of mitigating unnecessary casualties was one of the primary reasons that HAIP was ever established in the first place.

There would be paperwork. Will hates paperwork.

Hannibal's flicks his hand and a scalpel emerges from the tip of his pointer finger. He uses it to slice into the flesh of the target's exposed neck. The small scanner on the head of the scalpel flashes. A short pause. Then, glowing words flash across Will's field of vision: *DNA sample extracted. DNA sample confirmed. Target officially eliminated. Receipt sent to HAIP Database.*

Will's breath rushes out of him, all at once. "We got him," Will says. He is shaky in relief. He almost laughs. "Fuck. We really did it. We got Heljien. Fucking Heljien! We did it."

"Yes," Hannibal says. Hannibal's voice is perfectly even. Hannibal was never worried to begin with.

Hannibal never is.

Will dampens Hannibal's hormone responses and turns off the overlay. Beirut disappears in a single blink. Will's small, silent office immediately reasserts itself, and the change in perspectives is so rapid that Will experiences a moment of blind panic. That happens, sometimes – usually when he's keyed up. It's as if some dumb animal part of his brain sees the walls of his office rushing back into view, and mistakes them for the sides of a great mouth – a mouth snapping shut around him.

Preparing to swallow him whole.

–

Two hours later, Hannibal himself saunters into Will's office.

He looks far less exhausted than Will himself feels. He's already changed into a fresh suit, and he has the self-satisfied air of a victorious predator (because he is one), and he approaches Will's desk only to lean against it.

"You didn't tell me you were injured," Will says.

"I am not," says Hannibal carelessly. In fact, he's nearly pristine. His skin is hundreds of times tougher than a human's, and impervious to fire. However, something metal must have caught him across the face when he collided with the target. There's a scratch high up on his cheekbone.

"You are," says Will. "Look, it's begun to scar."

More than begun; the scar already looks a day old. Even on its own, without any input from Will, Hannibal's body heals quickly. Will leans forward and takes Hannibal by the chin. He frowns. He concentrates. He works through the fibrous granulation tissue until the wound blooms open again; forces Hannibal's body to spit out that cocktail of unique enzymes which a normal human body could never create on its own; watches the absurdly rapid cell replication which ensues.

The cut in Hannibal's face seals itself closed, seamlessly, before it's even had a chance to begin leaking clear fluid. It takes about fifteen seconds. A relatively easy job. But –

"It would've been easier," Will grumbles, sitting back in his chair, "if it hadn't scarred first. You should've told me when it happened." He rolls his neck. He's been told to stretch after every manipulation now; Alana's orders. He's started to get tension headaches after missions. Bad sign. "I could've prevented it from healing. Could've just kept it clotted for you until you got back."

"I didn't even feel myself being cut," Hannibal says, shrugging. "You would have felt it yourself, if the injury had been very bad. When you were inside my head." He leans over the glossy surface of Will's desk and peers down at his own reflection. He turns his face side-to-side, admiring his own features, shamelessly preening.

"Wow," says Will. He sounds overly fond, even to himself. "You're so vain. I don't even think vanity is even supposed to be possible, for an android."

“Is it vanity to acknowledge that something is beautiful? ” Hannibal looks up at Will through his pale white eyelashes. His face is exaggeratedly guileless, the way it is when he wants to make Will snicker. In a tone innocent enough to match his expression, he adds, “Do you not think I’m beautiful?”

Will – who was, in fact, snickering – falls silent as abruptly as if he were choked. He grabs for his mug and stalls for time by taking three huge gulps. “I think,“ he manages afterward, “you look like a little shit. Because you’re a little shit. You like winding me up.”

“How unfair. I am emotionally injured."

"I bet you are. You can't even feel emotions."

"You're right," says Hannibal, "I can't." But he smiles, like he thinks he and Will are sharing a joke.

Hannibal's face is designed to be pleasing, Will knows. Is it Will's fault that he should find it so? He looks down, takes another gulp of coffee. There's only coffee in his coffee mug today. No slugs of whiskey. Not when they’re hunting. Not when Hannibal is depending on him. Or, that is to say, not when HAIP is depending on him. Or, that is to say, not when his country is depending on him –

Oh, whatever. It’s all over now, in any case, at least until they get their next assignment, and as soon as he's alone, Will can reach down for the hidden flask of whiskey, and his head throbs in need of it. Then again, maybe it just throbs.

“Thank you,” Hannibal says suddenly.

Will looks back up, blinking. “Just doing my job.”

"You didn’t have to heal my face. You could have just let it scar.”

Other handlers would have, Will supposes. After all, a superficial scar wouldn’t affect the asset’s performance in any way. Most wouldn’t waste energy on something that amounted to a cosmetic procedure. “You’re unnaturally prissy," Will says gruffly. "You'd have whined to me until the end of time if I let your face get scarred up. I had to do it. For my own sanity.”

“Or perhaps you like my face,” says Hannibal, cocking his head. “Perhaps you like it too much to see it cut.”

“That's it, get out!”

Hannibal heads towards the door, smiling. Before he does, he wipes Beverly's fingerprints away from Will's desk.

–

The headache comes on in full about an hour later. Will finishes off a quarter of the flask of whiskey, and even that doesn’t help. Finally, he pops a pain reliever, follows it up with five breath mints at the same time, and staggers out of his office and towards the elevator. The

medical office is on the first floor. He's hoping Dr. Bloom will be in, even though it's getting past 8 PM.

Fortunately, she is.

Unfortunately, Dr. Chilton is as well.

"Ah, Will!" Chilton cries. "It's a pleasure to see one of our best handlers. I heard from Director Crawford earlier that you were assigned to tie up the last loose threads in that ugly Heljien affair. I presume that you have been successful?"

"I – "

"Oh, that is excellent to hear! Excellent, excellent work, as always. How are you? How is Hannibal?" He pauses. "Where is Hannibal?"

Will shrugs. Then, he changes his mind. "Back at my office," he lies. He doesn't think that Chilton would be happy to hear about the great margin of freedom he usually affords Hannibal.

Admittedly, most handlers probably keep better tabs on their assets than Will does. This, despite the fact that a HAIP proprietary android can never truly be lost; the mental link which connects Will to Hannibal is always persistent, and it can't be closed or manipulated from Hannibal's side. At any moment, Will can pinpoint Hannibal's whereabouts on a digital map, tune into his visual feed, get an echoed feel of his general sensations. If necessary, he can pump Hannibal's bodies with whatever hormones he wants. Make it move the way he wants it to. Make it speak. Make it pass out.

Make it die.

Will *can* do these things.

Outside of their missions, however, Will has rarely felt the need to track Hannibal very closely. If this makes Will unique among handlers, then it's only appropriate, for Hannibal himself is unique among assets. Most HAIP androids are far less independent than Hannibal: far less emotive, far less intelligent. Most assets operate like machines, because they are machines. Hannibal, meanwhile, could almost certainly carry out missions on his own without any direction from Will at all.

Not that Will would ever tell anyone that.

He doesn't know what would happen if he made his supervisors aware of Hannibal's unique individualism. He's selfish enough to want things to stay the same, regardless of whether things *should* stay the same or not. And Hannibal has never given Will cause to worry — which is more than can be said about most of the humans Will has ever known.

"I see," says Chilton. "Well, if you aren't busy some time, would you mind bringing him around to my office? I have some more tests I'd like to do on Hannibal – just out of personal scientific curiosity, you understand. I have a paper idea knocking about up here, and your

cooperation would be most helpful. By the way, I just watched the video recording of his – your – last mission, the one in Poland? My God, that was astonishing. He's truly unlike any other android I've ever seen. The mental acuity he displayed, the way he talks – his speech patterns sound so natural, almost human – and his dynamic problem-solving skills are – "

"I'm very good at piloting him," says Will. "I'm sorry, but can I please speak with Dr. Bloom in private?"

Dr. Bloom leaps at the opening, both metaphorically and literally. She rises out of her chair to shepherd a resisting Dr. Chilton out the door and says, "Thank you for bringing me the sample, Frederick. I'll talk to you tomorrow. Only after they're alone does she turn to Will, smiling apologetically, and ask, "Headache again?'

"Yeah. Worse this time." He smiles thinly. "Talking to Chilton didn't help."

For the next fifteen minutes, Alana takes Will through the usual paces. She listens to his vitals, scans his brain, samples his blood. Eventually, she looks up from the rows of data on her monitor and shakes her head. "Nothing out of the ordinary, Will. Cortisol and epinephrine a little high, but not enough to cause concern."

"So … nothing that indicates … "

"No."

Will plucks at a loose thread on the seam of his trousers. He doesn't want to say what he fears and sound foolish for it. He doesn't want to say what he fears and make it true.

Alana closes her laptop lid with a click. "Will," she says gently, putting her hand on his knee until he meets her eyes. "Let me emphasize: there are no signs that you're going through Detachment. None."

Will smiles mirthlessly. "But there aren't really any internal signs until the end, are there? Then the signs come on all at once – come on with a vengeance. Once I keel over and start foaming at the mouth, my chart will read pretty differently, I'm sure. And these headaches I've been having – "

"Headaches alone aren't a sign of impending Detachment, Will. You know that. Disconnections, audiovisual hallucinations – there are lots of other warnings. Besides, Detachment has only ever occurred in cases where the link is – faulty. Weak. I'd say your link with Hannibal is anything but. It's one of the most solid human-android connections that we've ever seen at the department."

Will doesn't look comforted. Alana hesitates. Then, leaning forward conspiratorially, she says, "Did you know that Chilton tried to pair with Hannibal before you arrived?"

The idea is too repulsive. It's enough to stop the anxious winding of Will's thoughts – as it was surely meant to. "What? You can't be serious, Alana!"

"You knew we tried matching Hannibal with a number of different handlers before you joined HAIP."

"Well, yeah, I knew that, but – Chilton?"

"He wanted to do it."

"Hannibal would never want that."

"Hannibal — no, Will, of course *Hannibal* didn't. Hannibal can't *want* anything. I meant that Chilton wanted it. We knew even from the outset that Hannibal was an extraordinary specimen. His intellectual flexibility was – unusual. After we went through the fifth potential handler who failed to make a connection, Chilton volunteered. I think Chilton was besotted with the idea of being the handler of one of the best assets we'd ever created. It was a bust, obviously."

"Obviously," Will repeats, his lip curling.

"We almost gave up on the idea of finding a match for Hannibal after that. We thought there must be something too unusual about the way his brain was wired."

"Then I joined."

"Then you joined."

"Doesn’t say good things about how my brain is wired, does it?"

"You must be feeling better, if you're making jokes."

"Who says I'm joking?" But, in fact, Will's headache has mostly dissipated. He hops down from the examining table. A thought occurs to him just as he's preparing to leave. "Do you really think they can't want things? Androids, I mean."

It's not the sort of question he'd ask any doctor other than Alana. He knows her well enough to assume that she won't be scribbling down a concerned note in his next psychological evaluation. Still, her expression becomes stony, if only in order to hide the fact that it wants to become concerned instead. "Are you getting philosophical on me?" she says.

"No. It's just – it's difficult not to – "

"I know. Will, I know. It's something that most handlers struggle with, eventually. They look so human, don't they? People can anthropomorphize a vacuuming robot, much less a realistic android. Anyone other than a sociopath is bound to begin wondering if they have normal emotions, human feelings, that kind of thing.

"But they don't."

"No," she says softly. "They don't. They may behave as if they do – Hannibal more than most, maybe, since he's so sophisticated – but it's all design. It's a user interface. They may smile or frown, but they don't *feel* . Any more than a vacuuming robot feels happy when it

slides back into its mount and chirps." She peers sympathetically at him. "I know it's difficult, but you should try to keep that in mind. It's better for your mental health."

And better for HAIP. Handlers getting sentimental – or, worse, getting protective – about their assets isn't good in their line of work. The handlers who tend towards that kind of thing find themselves removed from the program, and their assets decommissioned. Between the risk of that, and the difficulty of making a match in the first place, and the possibility of a fatal detachment occurring in the human – well, there's a reason HAIP is as small a department as it is. It isn't easy, creating a successful, long-term human-android pairing. It's why HAIP is always so desperate to get new matches. And Will's glad for their desperation.

Only an extremely desperate HAIP would have ever allowed an untried FBI transferee with a spotty psych eval to attempt linking with its best and most expensive asset.

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Will messages Hannibal through their link as he leaves Alana's office. By the time he reaches the building's exit, Hannibal is waiting for him.

"Are you all right?" says Hannibal.

The floodlights surrounding the HAIP building are brighter than the sun at midday; Will shrinks Hannibal's sensitive pupils for him before pushing the door open and leading them both out into the parking lot. "Why wouldn't I be all right?" Will says, wincing and blinking rapidly. If only he could shrink his own pupils so easily.

Hannibal shrugs. It's an easy, human sort of gesture, and one that he doesn't do it around other people. Around other people, Hannibal is always more … machine-like.

"Why," Will repeats suspiciously, "would you think I'm not all right?"

The connection between them is a one-way street; it allows Will to freely experience (and manipulate) Hannibal's mind without Hannibal having reciprocal access. And yet – and yet, Hannibal often seems to possess an uncanny level of intel on Will: on what he's been doing, and saying, and thinking. It's like he's been spelunking in Will's head.

"You were in the medical ward," Hannibal says. "You smell of it. And of Dr. Bloom's perfume."

Ah. That would do it too.

Will rubs at his eyes, feeling foolish. "That'd be because I went to see Dr. Bloom."

"How was Dr. Bloom?"

"Good."

"Why did you see her?"

"Because I like her." As soon as the words leave his mouth, Will feels himself redden. He does like Dr. Bloom, of course – she's very likable – but he knows that isn't why he said what he said. He chances a sideways glance.

Hannibal is staring out across the parking lot. His elegant features are all smooth placidity. Peeved for reasons that he doesn't want to examine too closely, Will throws wide their mental link, trying to get a sense of what Hannibal is feeling (because Hannibal does have feelings, no matter what the scientists and programmers have to say about it). This time, however, the scientists and doctors might as well be correct; delving into Hannibal's mental landscape at the moment is like being submerged in a tub of lukewarm water. Will senses nothing but bland serenity. A perfect match to Hannibal's serene expression.

Will withdraws, feeling more foolish than ever. More than that – feeling guilty.

What was he hoping to find inside of Hannibal anyway? Anger? Envy? Possessiveness, to reflect the possessiveness that Will himself felt earlier after learning how Chilton – ridiculous, slimy Chilton – once tried to fumble his way into Hannibal's mind? It's pathetic. Thank God the link is one-sided. Thank God Hannibal can't see into his head.

Clearing his throat, Will says contritely, "I, uh – I mostly went because I had a headache. A bad one."

"You've been getting those more frequently."

"Yeah."

"Mr. Verger is approaching."

"What? Oh God, no, not – "

"Will! Mr. Will Graham!"

And he was so close to reaching his car too. Instead, Will reluctantly turns and finds Mason Verger strolling towards them with his hands in his pockets and his mouth smiling broadly. That's one of the unsettling things about Mason: his mouth seems to smile independently of the rest of his face. It makes him look a little bit like a madman, which is fitting, because Will's always thought that you'd have to be a madman to be in the line of work they're in. Mason more than most.

Margot follows a few feet behind Mason. She moves gracefully, but robotically. Her eyes are empty. Her face is empty. Most androids' faces are, unless they're being directed to appear otherwise.

"I hear that congratulations are in order, Mr. Graham," Mason says. "You really got our terrorist. We've been searching for Heljien for nearly a year now."

"I only turned in my report a few hours ago. News travels fast, does it?"

Mason laughs. "Not as fast as you can travel, apparently. But yes, Crawford sent out a department-wide email earlier. I assume it will be all over the news stations tomorrow. Ah,

were you going home just now? Don't worry, I won't keep you long. I just spotted you as I was leaving and figured that I'd pat you on the back." Mason makes, thankfully, no move to actually pat Will on the back. "Specifically, I wanted to make sure you knew that there are no hard feelings from me. None whatsoever."

And here's the second unsettling thing about Mason Verger: how quickly his demeanor can change. It changes now. His face falls as abruptly as a curtain; his disjointed smile suddenly seems to have more teeth.

"Oh, yes," Mason says, and his hands are curling into obvious fists in his pockets, "I'll admit, I was a little upset when Crawford put you on the case instead of me. Just a little bit."

From the corner of his eye, Will notices Hannibal taking a discreet step forward, so that he's slightly in front of Will instead of slightly behind him. At the same time, Will notices something else: he notices that Margot's face seems to – to shift. Or, at least, Will thinks it shifts. He can't be certain. But he thinks that it did. He thinks that her expression might have – changed. For just a second.

When Will turns his gaze on her fully, however, he sees that she looks exactly as she did before: motionless and cold and impassive.

" – but that's all water under the bridge now," Mason is saying cheerfully. "It's all come out well in the end, hasn't it? And we're a team! One person's victory is everyone's victory – or, should I say, HAIP's victory. Oh, damn, is that my phone? Sorry, got to cut this short. It was nice seeing you, Will. Good bye!"

Mason throws Will a lazy salute, brushes past him, and climbs into the driver's seat of a nearby car (a sleek, Italian job, as oily-looking as Mason is himself). Mason barely waits for Margot to get into the passenger seat before he peels out of the parking lot.

"Christ," Will mutters. He watches as Mason's rear lights pass between the two guard towers and disappear through the exit in the electrified, barbed wire fence surrounding the HAIP building. "No wonder the guy's so good at this job. He's such a creepy bastard, he could probably scare all his targets to death himself. No asset needed."

The memory of the asset in question – of Margot, and her flat, dead face – makes Will grimace. He's always been good at imagining things, especially things that he shouldn't be imagining. He imagines now. He imagines being linked to a man like Mason: linked right through the head too, linked as brutally as a fish that's been speared through with a hook is linked to the fisherman who did the spearing. He imagines being destined to jerk and dance forever, helplessly, under the command of Mason Verger. And then he thinks that maybe it's a very good thing indeed that Hannibal isn't typical of HAIP androids after all, that it's a very good thing that most androids are less human, and more like machines.

Machines can't feel.

"I swear to God," Will mutters distractedly, fishing for his keys in his pocket, "something's the matter with that guy."

"Yes."

"Yes?" When Will turns around, he finds Hannibal standing beside the car with the keys. He's already opened Will's door for him.

"I may not be human," says Hannibal, sounding amused as he circles the car and gets into the passenger seat, "but I am not blind."

–

Will's apartment is too small for two grown men. It's too small even for one grown man and one android.

Hell, it might be too small for one person alone.

Will bought it before he started working at HAIP, before he started making the kind of salary that HAIP workers do. Not that he would have chosen differently even if he had the money to do so at the time. Will liked small places. The smaller and more isolated the better.

Things are a bit different now though. Now, he often finds himself considering whether he ought to start looking for a bigger house, or maybe a nicer one, because there isn't a lot of privacy here (not that Will should need privacy from an android, but –), and besides – and besides, Hannibal would like it —

Ah, yes, Hannibal would like it, thinks Will sourly. He flicks on the lights and tosses his mail on his tiny kitchen table. Since when did ge start basing his life decisions around what Hannibal would like? Hannibal isn't even supposed to be able to like things at all. But *supposed to* or not, Will knows only too well that Hannibal is able to like things — because one of the things that Hannibal inexplicably likes is Will himself.

Will's always had a weakness for that kind of thing. For beings who end up liking him.

Few enough ever do.

"Would you like me to cook you something for dinner?" says Hannibal. Hannibal is monstrously talented at cooking, just as he's monstrously talented at most things. Will doesn't know whether cooking in particular is a skill that HAIP androids are programmed with, or whether it's something unique to Hannibal. He never thought it a good idea to draw more attention to Hannibal by asking a higher-up.

"Nah," says Will, "that's OK. I'm not hungry."

"Will, you must eat."

"I must eat?"

"Yes," says Hannibal. "You have exerted yourself quite a lot today. And you've had a lot of whiskey to drink." (Will scowls; there's no sense trying to hide anything from Hannibal). "Eat. You will feel better afterwards."

So Will eats. He feels better afterwards.

He also feels guilty. He feels guilty whenever Hannibal does something for him, regardless of whether Will ordered him to do it or not, because the fact of the matter is that Will owns Hannibal – well, no, that's not true. Technically, HAIP owns Hannibal. But Will controls Hannibal. An android's personality, such as it is, is designed to arise from the unique combination of the android's own base programming and the distinct neural signature of the handler. What sort of neural signature did Will feed into the link exactly? Is it the fault of own faulty brain, his unknown hopes, his – his unconscious yearning – that Hannibal – that he –

"Will," says Hannibal, and he takes Will by the back of his neck and kisses him.

– that he does that?

"Will, you are thinking very hard," Hannibal murmurs this against Will's jaw. His breath is sweet and cool.

"I know," says Will miserably. "Hannibal – "

Hannibal kisses him again. Hannibal is good at kissing.

He's had enough practice at it.

–

The first time they kissed was three years ago, only a few months after they first linked, and – to make it even more sordid – they were in Will's office. Will did the kissing then. Will was drunk, because of course he was. Hannibal wasn't drunk, because androids can't get drunk, but maybe he was drunk on Will's thoughts, and that would only make the whole thing worse –

"I'm sorry," Will gasped, even as his hands kept groping at the lapels of Hannibal's suit, at his waist, at the corded strength of his forearms. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry." Hannibal had just returned from a mission; he smelled like dust and blood and clean machinery. Will couldn't get enough. Not of the scent of him. Not of his face, and not of his beautiful hands, and not of his accented voice, and not of the way he looked at Will. "I'm sorry it's just that you're so – you're so – "

"What am I?" murmured Hannibal. He sounded genuinely curious. He was looking at Will, and his head was cocked consideringly, and his red eyes were sharp, and they focused on Will with the same intentness that he employed when hunting people down – when killing them – and Will couldn't possibly answer him because there were too many things that Hannibal was. Too many things that Hannibal shouldn't be allowed to be.

Still, Will jumped off of the desk – sending his emptied flask of whiskey skittering across the floor – and pressed himself against Hannibal. He wanted. He wanted so viciously that his teeth ached. He felt as if he'd been starving his entire life for the things that Hannibal had so generously been giving him ever him since the moment when their bond first clicked into

place: a sense of being needed, and a sense of being understood, and, more than that, a sense of being wholly accepted –

You're mine , Will thought viciously. *That's what you are. You're mine. You're mine. You're mine.*

But he didn't say that, of course.

–

Now, Hannibal topples Will back onto the threadbare sofa, and spreads him out there, and kisses him – kisses him so well that, for a time, Will forgets that he feels ashamed. When he flutters his eyes open again, he finds that some indeterminate number of minutes have passed and that their faces are still connected at the mouth and that Hannibal's bright red eyes are boring, unblinkingly, into his own. Hannibal does that when he kisses: stares. It's disconcerting, because it’s so inhuman. It's fucking hot, because it's so inhuman.

Will pulls abruptly away; their lips part with a wet sound. "You don't even like it," Will says hoarsely. He pushes at Hannibal's chest. This should have about the same effect as a baseball hitting the broad side of an elephant, generally speaking, but Hannibal humors him. He sits back obligingly, with his legs folded on either side of Will's stomach, and his firm ass presses down onto the place where Will's pants tent obscenely. And that's so much worse.

That's so much worse because it's so much better.

"What don't I like?" Hannibal says.

"Kissing." Will is breathless. "You do it for my sake."

Hannibal smiles. Christ, his mouth. Will wants to slip his thumb inside of it, feel the too-sharp points of his artificial canines. "I like it," Hannibal says, "because you like it. I like seeing you enjoy yourself."

"Right, but that's not – that's exactly what I mean."

"You think too much." Hannibal starts unbuttoning Will's shirt. His fingers are long, and nimble, and shockingly hot when they brush against the skin of Will's chest.

"You don't want – "

The rest of Will's words catch in his throat. Hannibal has just scooted back and unbuckled Will's pants. Without preamble, he slides one large, hot, capable hand down the front of Will's trousers and cups him.

"But *you* want," says Hannibal, almost laughing, and the truth of that is so apparent that Will doesn't bother answering. "You're too tense. Let me help you with that, Will."

He grips Will by his waist. He flips him like an egg.

About half an hour later, Will realizes that he is more tense currently than he's ever been in his life. He's also ass-up, and face-down in the sofa cushion, and probably drooling into it, so at least his tenseness has an immediate cause. "Come on," he groans, "come on, come on, come on – "

"You're too tense," Hannibal murmurs again. His fingers make slick, humiliating sounds as they go in and out of Will.

"And you're – not exactly – helping with that – "

Hannibal curls his fingers, hard. A pearly white line spits from the head of Will's cock. "Christ!"

"I will help you," says Hannibal primly. "I will fuck you now."

And he does. He does it well too. Sex was designed to be another weapon for HAIP androids.

(In practice, though, it's a rarely employed. Most androids simply can't mimic human behavior well enough to seduce a human. Hannibal could, of course. That's because Hannibal is Hannibal. But if broad seduction is a skill that Hannibal possesses, it's not one that he's yet been called on to exercise for professional purposes, and thank God for that, because Will doesn't know how he'd ever bear watching Hannibal fuck someone else. He probably couldn't bear it. He'd probably throw any assignment, regardless of its importance to HAIP or to the nation or the world, just to prevent that from happening. No wonder sentimentality is such a bad trait in a HAIP handler.)

Something wet glides along Will's inner thigh. Hannibal's cock is slightly less fleshy than a normal human's and not as hot – but it's wide. Even with Will so well-stretched, and Hannibal dripping lubricant, the first slow breach makes Will groan and claw at the sofa. "I'm OK," he's moaning before Hannibal's even all the way inside of him. "I'm OK, don't stop, don't stop – "

"I won't," Hannibal says soothingly, like he's comforting an irrational child.

Hannibal starts off slowly, shallowly, trying multiple angles; it takes him only a few tries to hit the right one, and Will gasps and groans when he does. After that, Hannibal never misses. He begins pistoning in and out, in a rhythm too smooth to be human, and he has to put a hand on the curve of Will's spine to stop him from pushing back for more. After a while of that, he folds himself over, presses his nose behind Will's ear (he likes to smell Will, the weird bastard). He's still dressed in his suit, and the tie flops down on Will's naked back, cool and silky, making Will flinch.

"How is it?" Hannibal murmurs. He's not even panting.

"It's … oh … you know it's good – "

Will can feel Hannibal smiling against his neck. Then, Hannibal bites him there, hard, and Will jerks and exhales a wobbly groan. Of course Hannibal knew that Will would like that.

Over the years, Hannibal's made a rigorous study of Will's likes: all of the things that make him squirm and shiver and wail. And Will does squirm. He does shiver. He does wail. Hannibal's cock is filling him so perfectly, and his thrusts – though unhurried and languid – still have him grinding against Will's prostate each time, like clockwork.

Will's more than ready to bring himself over the edge. He brings his hand down to fist his own cock, but Hannibal grabs his wrist and pins it down beside him.

"No," Hannibal says calmly. "I don't think so. Not yet." His cool nonchalance makes Will want to hiss and whimper at the same time.

"Are you kidding me?" Will snaps. "Do you like seeing me suffer?"

Hannibal pauses on the next inward thrust, as if he's actually considering the question. Will bucks wildly in impatience. "Have I ever made you suffer, Will?" he says thoughtfully.

"All the damn time!"

Hannibal laughs. Then he presses down with all his weight and grinds harshly into Will; a slick, deliberate, filthy grind that seems to touch every tender place inside of Will. Will's mouth falls open.

"Oh God!" he nearly sobs.

His knees won't hold him any longer. His hips collapse under him, and Hannibal follows him down, as elegantly as he does anything. *That's millions of dollars' worth of state of the art technology behind me* , Will thinks, almost hysterically . *And I'm letting it fuck the life out of me.* Then the next hard thrust knocks Will down onto the sofa cushion, rubs the swollen, sensitive tip of his cock against the scratchy weft of the fabric, and Will can't think much of anything anymore.

Hannibal's thrusts are picking up speed now. He has to hold Will in place so that his head doesn't knock up against the arm of the sofa. The sofa cushion is still unbearably rough on Will's poor, tender prick (unbearable, and almost painful, but perfect, so perfect), and Will's making sounds that seem tortured out of him, and then it's no good Hannibal's saying *not yet* , not when Will is going to come – he's going to come, he's going to come right now, except – except – except, he can't.

He can't.

His eyes blink open wide. "What – what the fuck – ?" he gasps.

"I told you," Hannibal says from somewhere over his head. "Not yet." There's a hint of amusement in his pleasant voice. "Not until I think you're ready for it."

"What?"

Will yanks furiously at his wrist, still trapped in Hannibal's grip. Hannibal lets him go. Will raises his hips – breaking out in a sweat at the way this changes the angle of Hannibal's thrusts – and reaches under himself. He begins furiously pulling at his prick. It’s hard as

diamonds and the tip is leaking outrageously, and he's so ready, and it feels so good, but he can't – he can't –

"Why – ?" Will gasps, reeling, nearly blind with his desperation, and then Hannibal takes him by the hair and turns his head at a mean angle and kisses him again.

Will doesn't how much time passes like that: being mercilessly fucked, being kissed. Not fucking coming. By the time Hannibal finally flips him back around onto his back effortlessly, Will's whimpering with each breath and leaking tears down his temple and his cock is nearly sore from how hard he's been stroking it.

Hannibal usually likes having Will on his back when he comes; the knowledge of that brings Will out of the near-stupor he's fallen into, and he babbles, "Yes, yes, yes, I'm ready, I can't, I can't, I need – please – "

"When I say," says Hannibal firmly.

His words are still far from rough, but there's an edge to them now. It's not an edge of sexual desire. Androids don't feel sexual desire in the way that humans do – not even Hannibal. But Will remembers what it was like, the one time he opened the link while Hannibal was fucking him; it nearly overwhelmed him, and so he doesn't do it often. He remembers being nearly pierced through by the flood of sensations: fascination, intrigue, covetousness, amusement, fierce want. Not a physical want, no, not that, not for all that it throbbed like an open wound. The want was – was something like – like the desire to draw as many reactions as possible from Will, to put him in extremity and see how he reacted, to make him feel the way that Hannibal wanted him to feel, to own his kisses and his sighs and his pleas, to *own* –

Hannibal presses his face alongside Will. His artificial pupils are swollen black, and wide, and hungry. He watches a tear trail down Will's cheek. Licks it away.

"Yes," Hannibal says casually, his lips damp. "Now, I should think."

And, all at once, it's like something loosens in Will's brain. A thread unspools in his stomach. A tingling sensation starts in his toes. "Oh," Will says. He hears his voice as if from a great distance, "I think — I *can't* — "

He comes. His limbs jerk. His cock spurts nearly up to his chin. His cock aches. He thinks he might be screaming. When he comes back to himself, sweating and sobbing and probably more dead than alive, it's to the sight of Hannibal dipping a thumb into the semen pooling on Will's naked stomach and bringing it up to his mouth. Hannibal sucks.

Their eyes meet.

"Your sperm count is normal," says Hannibal, "and your semen production is very healthy."

Will stares.

"You are also no longer tense." Hannibal lets his hand drop with an air of satisfaction. "I said that I would help you."

Will begins to laugh. He laughs and laughs, even as Hannibal stands and retrieves a damp washcloth to wipe him down with, and Hannibal himself is smiling, lazily. He's already slipped his cock back into his trousers. It doesn't ejaculate, his cock, but it can be made soft or hard at will; no doubt Hannibal softened it as soon as Will was finished. Hannibal doesn't like anything ruining the precise cut of his trousers.

You wouldn't be able to tell, from looking at him, how thoroughly he just fucked his master.

Yes, it was very thorough. Will stretches drowsily. Very thorough, and very good. But – was there something a little bit weird there at the end? He's never had trouble coming before, not in recent memory. Has his affection for Hannibal somehow made a traitor of his own subconscious? Made him so eager to please that he can't even fucking come without permission? Not a great thought. He'll have to examine it more closely. Maybe another day. Maybe when his head doesn't feel so mushy. Even as he lays there, the thought seems to be drifting away from him –

Something else drifts back though. As he watches Hannibal slink around the small room, turning out lights and closing curtains, the guilt – which is never far from Will – hits him again. Androids don't typically want sex. Or, at least, Will's never heard of androids wanting sex. Androids protect their handlers, sure, they're wired to do that – but they don't *take care of them* in the way that Hannibal takes care of Will. Not with such tenderness.

It must be Will. He's corrupted Hannibal. His loneliness, his secret longings, have made Hannibal what he is.

Will has taken a priceless government-owned killing machine and turned it into his own Galatea.

"You're frowning again." Hannibal is looming over him. He shakes his head with mock exasperation, even as a smile still flickers about his exquisite mouth. "Must you always think? Go brush your teeth, and then go to sleep. You will feel better afterwards."

What else is there to do?

Will goes to brush his teeth. Then he goes to sleep.

He does, in fact, feels better afterwards.

End Notes

look. fuck it. this was supposed to be the first part of a multi-chaptered fic but it's been like an actual year and i think it stands on its own. so i did a quick copy-edit and here it is as its own thing.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!